

## **Jerusalem as a paradigm: ‘whatever urbanism’ and Agamben’s paradigms to rescue urban exceptionalism**

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Can Jerusalem be considered a paradigm in urban studies and urban theory? Widening the debate over the “contested” and the “ordinary”, this paper tries to address such questions whilst engaging with Giorgio Agamben’s powerful concept of paradigms. Considering Jerusalem as a super, hyper-exceptional case trapped in the tension between particularism and exceptionalism, the paper reflects on Agamben’s approach to examples—or paradigms—which deeply engage the powers of analogy, enabling discernment between previously unseen affinities among singular objects by stepping outside established systems of classification and becoming worth for all. The paper suggests a possible new concept, ‘whatever urbanism’, to disentangle the apparent dichotomy between ordinary and contested as urban labels.

**Key words:** Jerusalem, Agamben, Whatever, paradigm, contested urbanism

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## Introduction

Massimo Cacciari, Italian philosopher and once Mayor of Venice, argued that “the city does not exist, what exists are different and distinct forms of urban lives” (2004:4), suggesting the impossibility of a common, universal definition of what a city is and calling for an anti-essentialist acceptance of the multiple origins and futures of urban territories. Tracing down the etymological origins of now-often-used terms, such as *polis* and *civitas*, Cacciari suggests that the linguistic difference between them, the Greek and the Latin, are essential to the origin and the nature of the city itself. The *polis* for him is the place where determined people, *genos*, specific for traditions and uses, has its own *ethos*. On the other side the word *civitas* grounds its origin in the *cives*, a group of people that got together to form the city under the same law and norms. With that in mind, it seems that the *polis* resembles - fundamentally - the unity of people, the togetherness of citizens, the place and the site of the origins, however in the *civitas*, the original founding myth is the convergence of diversities of gens who agree on the power of a common law: *Ab urbe contitia*.

The Roman constitution does not recognize in the *civitas* the origin, but the result, of a process of becoming or as Cacciari suggests “growth, development and complication”. What holds together all such differences is certainly not the roots, the *genos*, but rather the aim, the end, the goal: the expansion of the empire. On the contrary the issue with the *polis* is not the excessive expansion in order to hold control over a “manageable” territory, within its borders within which the *genos* is rooted. *Civitas* grows and expands itself *de-lira*, transgressing its borders<sup>1</sup>, its limits. The issue with the contemporary city, Cacciari is suggesting, is exactly this renewed tension between two ideas of cities. What emerges is a city that is *polemos*, conflict, the stage of great tensions between rootedness (*polis*) and pact; treaty (*civitas*), fixity and movement; dwelling, property and exchange, commerce; memory and future. The essence of the urban appears to be the capacity to hold such competing different qualities in a dynamic perennial conflict in an irreducible tension. The city is *polemos*, is contestation par excellence. The city is evolving, growing and changing, through the courageous attempt of recombining the elements of such tensions, despite

the inability to resolve them. The city is *cumplexus*, what is embraced, weaved together, in a multiplicity of forms in an impossible final synthesis.

Cacciari was right in pointing to the fact that no single definition of city exists. One single city is impossible. The city is in a continuous mutation, reassembly, change and transformation, but it exists just because it is inhabited, perceived and lived: its consistency is the plot of the different desires, ambitions, hopes and projects it is able to arouse. If the city is not unique, the knowledge of contemporary urbanisms is not homogeneous as well, and thus no single universalist claims on urban epistemology is possible, as it does appear to emerge from a complex interaction between “cultural structures, social values, individual and collective actions and observations of the material arrangements” (Hou et all 2015:3). Or to put it differently as Yiftachel (this issue) emerge “from the multiple, intense, dynamic relational nature of urban structural forces the co shape the city”.

These claims of the impossibility of capturing the essence of city in an unitary project, image and form, fit well into the recent resurgence of interest in the idea of comparative urbanism. As Peck (2015:162) reminds us “the ongoing work of remaking of urban theory must occur across cases, which means confronting and problematizing substantive connectivity, recurrent processes and relational power relations, in addition to documenting difference, in a ‘contrastive’ manner, between cities. It must also occur across scales, positioning the urban scale itself, and working to locate cities not just within lateral grids of difference, in the ‘planar’ dimension, but in relational and conjuncture terms as well”.

This essay is superimposing the reflection and the speculation of ‘learning from Jerusalem’ as a super, hyper-exceptional case built around the oppositional tensions between particularism and exceptionalism, contested and ordinary, with a possible new concept, “whatever urbanism”. This is undertaken around lines of thought in contemporary urbanism and the contested cities framework; introducing Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “whatever”—developed in his 1993 book *The Coming Community*—in urbanism discourse. In order to disentangle the apparent dichotomy between ordinary and contested, this paper reflects on Agamben’s approach to examples—or paradigms—which deeply engage the

powers of analogy, enabling the discernment of previously unseen affinities among singular objects by stepping outside established systems of classification. Analogy, for Agamben, is opposed to the principle dichotomy that dominates Western logic. Against the alternative drastic "or A or B," (ordinary or contested, exceptional or universal) which excludes the third, it claims each time its *tertium datur*, his stubborn "neither A nor B". The analogy intervenes, not to compose dichotomies in a higher synthesis, but to turn them into a force field by tensions polar, where, as occurs in an electromagnetic field, they lose their identity substantial and suggest novel imagination, possible future interpretations and meanings: in a way profaning the notions of ordinary and contested. In this way we come to envision novel groupings, new patterns of connection—that nonetheless do not simply reassemble those singular objects into yet another rigidly fixed set or class but allow us "to see again" and render such concepts inoperative. The pages that follow, although deliberately conceptual, use empirical evidence and factual narratives grounded in the author's experiences in Cambodia, Italy and Colombia to contrast the hyper-potential case of Jerusalem beyond its exception. "Whatever urbanism" can hopefully contribute to elaborating the tensions of debating a "particular case", which is seen neither as an universal nor specific example. In this sense I hope Jerusalem with its manifold uneven and unstable social, economical, colonial and political urban forces and spatial dispositive could become a signifier of future urbanism a a *tertium datur*, a paradigm for urban studies. Somehow along the line of what was the panopticon for Foucault or the camp for Agamben, I hope Jerusalem in its complex *dispositif* at play in the same territory could become a theoretical object that one can learn from to better understand urban processes and form.

### **Framing the discourse: between particularism and exceptionnalities**

The complexity of contemporary urban conditions creates the impossibility of a unitary vision, form, definition, design and image of a city. Urbanism and urban studies scholars face a seemingly contradictory task. On the one hand, the need to remain vigilant and to wage war on totality, that is, to critique and subvert any and all established systems of categories that span from the very being of the city

(Mcfarlane 2010; Wachsmuth 2014; Scott and Storper 2014), or the multiplicity of urbanisms (Merrifield 2013; Brenner 2014) across the different fields of urban theory (Robinson 2014; Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Peck 2015). On the other hand they need to, as Lyotard (1979/1984:82) says, “save the honor of the name”, that is, preserve the power of language to reveal and make sense of our world and our lives. But how do we do both? How can we question and criticize the constant classification of cities and urban material conditions, ontological objects and subsume them within specific categories, and on the other side, recognize and respect language’s capacity to name, classify, and assess real-world in-situ experiences and singular assemblages? And how can we then recognize the existence of a multiplicity of urbanisms assuming their *de facto* contested nature? Specifically it does seem important to acknowledge that in order to move towards a deeper contextual understanding of contemporary urbanism, we must continue to move beyond the global or world city discourse; the oversimplified term offering an authorized image of city’s success that misleadingly ascribes characteristics of parts of cities to the whole (Robinson 2006).

Roy (2011) has proposed the concept of worlding, a term that seeks to recover and restore the vast array of global strategies of urban development and the production of urban space and models of urbanism that include those previously marginal in the production of urban research and theory. Robinson (2006:126) instead, advocates the need to understand cities as ordinary rather than other and to develop “creative ways of thinking about connections across the diversity and complexity of economies and city life”. Postcolonial analysis and reflections have had an interesting impact especially in disrupting the formal/informal binary used to reproduce, albeit at a different scale, the division between global cities and megacities (Varley 2013). The postcolonial city has reconfigured itself in literature and culture, as an urban space that constantly explores its modernity along various, conflicting lines of identity, representation, production and reproductions (Bishop et. all 2003; Yiftachel 2009). Also progressive ‘development planning’ (Levy and Allen 2013) has contributed to disentangle dichotomies, such as “developed” and “developing”, global north and global

south (Parnell and Oldfield 2014); problematising the making and the being of urban conditions. Beyond mainstream urbanisms, Shatkin (2011) suggests that “other” urbanisms, rooted in alternative social dynamics, have challenged the vision, legitimacy and authority of master planning; pushing the emergence of different strategies into different locales remaining in anyway “actually existing”. Recently, Hou et al, (2015) suggest another “new urbanism” as a “complex practice that is simultaneously, local regional and global [...] grounded in the imperfect, messy reality of the everyday. Similar reflections that have been recently elaborated in a paper titled “Cites Beyond Compare?” by Jamie Peck who, in tracing the evolution of the urban theoretical discourses around comparative urbanism in its postcolonial and political economy perspectives, suggests that “uniqueness and particularity are back (again) and finding exceptions to—as well as taking exception to—general urban-theoretical rules have become significant currents in the literature” (Peck 2015:161). All reflections that somehow stem from what Lefebvre suggested almost forty years ago in *The Urban Revolution* (2003[1970]) advancing the thesis of complete urbanization: a general transformation of society, changing the living condition of habitable territories, a dissolution of the social and morphological structure and its dispersion in all sorts of fragments and the creation of an urban society as the result of contradictory historical processes full of conflicts and struggles (Brenner 2014; Stanek et all 2015).

Recognizing that there are a myriad of relationships between the built environment and how it structures and is structured by social life, understanding this multiplicity of urbanisms, reinforces the need to also understand the political, economic and social dynamics at play within the urban fabric when acting in the urban realm across time and space. The compositional, messy, uncontrollable and the recombinant nature of the present urbanism, and the differential knowledge at play in the construction of the urban as object and subject is anything but straightforward. Rather it is energized and constructed in a continuous process of creation, legitimization and contestation. A renewed anti essentialist shift in urban studies and practice is welcome as is “shaking up old explanatory hierarchies and pushing aside stale concepts [...]making space for a

much richer plurality of voices, in a way that some have likened to a democratization of urban theory. In the critical literature, special places have been reserved for insurgent, rogue, subaltern and alt-urbanisms, as a premium has been newly attached to the disputation of generalized theory claims through disruptive or exceptional case studies" (Peck 2015:161).

The present debate appears to be trapped in on the one side, the exceptionalism of urban theory reflections with 'the global city' modeling and its countervailing reflections on ordinary cities guided with its anti-essentialist ethos and assemblage methodological inputs and, on the other, a more particularistic mode of enquiry with expansion of cases and non-usual, not-northern, not-neoliberal case-study singularities.

The basic and somehow banal assumption of this paper is that the urban is a de facto process oriented, contingent and contested condition. As I have argued elsewhere—inspired both by Cacciari and Lefebvre—the urban is embedded in a web of contested visions where the production of space is an inherently conflictive process, manifesting, producing and reproducing various forms of injustice; as well as alternative forces of transgression and social projects (Boano et al. 2013). We use the notion of "contested urbanism" (Boano et. al. 2010; 2013) to depict the inevitable impossibility of reconciling monolithic and unitary urban visions. The term, used as an intellectual framework, emerged in a study in Dharavi, Mumbai, where we depict the hegemonic and technocratic discourses that sit behind aggressive interventions, both state and market driven; focussing attention on the politics of urban transformations that systematically excluded many urban dwellers whose visions, aspirations and everyday lives were ignored and "mastered" in conventional, transnational alien forms of urbanism (Watson 2009; 2014). Since then we have recognized that the notion of contestation, certainly appropriate for the confrontational, speculative and situated politic that emerged in the Dharavi Redevelopment Plan, was not unique. Contestations, if understood as oppositional confrontational, resistive and situated politics of spaces, are part of being urban (Sevilla-Butrago 2013). Certainly discovering and researching urbanisms at a global scale, especially in and from southern and eastern perspectives (Yiftachel 2009; Watson 2014; Parnell and Oldfield 2014) does seem to have its own advantage. In fact

problems often relate to multi-scalar processes in which many institutions intervene simultaneously, from the conventions that organize social life (including colonial legacies), to the formalised political processes that create state power and other forms of authority as well as multiple aspects from socio-ecological interactions to the possibilities of drawing democratic forms of governance within a given political and spatial system. These are all dynamic processes, which make outcomes unpredictable, mutable, and not homogenous and where the current trend of urbanization (McGranahan and Satterthwaite 2014; Stanek et all 2015) is creating a variety of urban situations we actually lack the vocabulary to describe. Urbanism is certainly made and remade by encounters between different visions about what kind of future is desirable and, thus, conflict between different parties is often unavoidable, and may generate division and eventually new forms of negotiated collaboration. Certainly that is when the analysis moves onto ethnically contested urban space (Bollens 2012; Brand 2009; Gaffikin et all 2010; Pullan and Baillie 2013), that the contestation is taking violent form and sectarian spatialities is well developed and researched. From this short account of the literature, partial and fragmented, it emerges that urbanism is contested *per se*, in its very nature, as illustrated in the opening erudite account offered by Cacciari. Different kinds of contested cities, then, share and are developing growing similarities stemming from ethnic, racial and class conflicts revolving around issues of housing, infrastructure, participation representation, access and certainly identity. Within the recurring debate around comparative urbanism McFarlane and Robinson (2012) have recently called for the investigation of difference in comparative urban research, pointing to the interesting proliferations of urban labels and how to represent such a multiplicity of different urban forms. However, how do we treat particular urban labels? As an interesting recollection, back in 1985 Wood reminded us that “labelling is a way of referring to the process by which policy agendas are established [...] defined in convenient images” which involves disaggregation, standardization, and the formulation of clear-cut categories. Labels somehow—both in their narrative expansion as well as in their creation of knowledge subjects and political connections—suffer also from the phenomenon of exceptionalism. The creation and the justification of “exceptional cases” that stay

in prominent situations due to their “exceptionality”, beyond the accepted norm circumstances. Labels are political in the sense that they construct subjectivity. How then to disentangle the apparent *empasse* of urban studies where, on one side there is a great call for comparatives across scales, spaces and diversities, and the exponential multiplication of discursive urban labels that attempt to define, specify and connote a specific urbanism? In addition, how is it possible to keep reflecting on the transnational learning across cases, specific ones, and how those, overly studied, can become models; due to their popularity and richness of urban contents? And specifically why can Jerusalem be located in that discourse? Despite the recurrent urban exceptionalism (Peck 2015) there is no authoritative definition of “exceptionalism” as a political or legal concept. For our argument here we can see roughly two ways. The first is narrow and strong. It takes the ‘ism’-element of the term seriously suggesting something more than merely being special and implies an exceptionalist attitude, perhaps even an ideology which attributes a larger meaning or an essential function to this or that phenomenon: in urban studies this “ism” applies to Shanghai (Weinstein and Ren 2009), Cape Town (Watson 2009; 2014) and certainly Jerusalem (Rosen and Shilai 2010; 2014). The other possible meaning of the term is broader and weaker. It merely refers to the question of whether an entity or a case are special, normally using seemingly value-free comparisons which seeks to identify characteristics. As such exceptional-in-the-sense-of-special is sometimes used to construct rhetorical gestures and disciplinary regimes. In here several cases of ethnically divided cities could fit into this category: Beirut, Sarajevo, Jerusalem again, etc

### **Jerusalem: hyper exceptionality**

Few cities in the world fascinate and puzzle scholars like Jerusalem. As a city with historic, spiritual and cultural magnetism, it is well known for multiple controversies around identity, territory, space, history and nature; all inscribed in its historic and modern built environment. Jerusalem is a city mired in spatial conflict. Its contested spaces represent deep conflicts among groups that vary by national identity, religion, religiosity and gender (Rosen and Shilai 2014).

In the past half-century, overt ethnonational rifts and Israeli actions to establish its sovereignty over occupied Palestinian land spurs attention to extensive urban research (Allegra et all 2012; Allegra 2013; Benvenisti 1998; Boano and Marten 2013; Busbridge 2013; 2014; Chiodelli 2012; 2013; Klein 2001; Dumper 2014; Hasson 1996; Shlay and Rosen 2010). Since the mid-1990s the rise of a right-wing municipal government has propelled an acceleration of Jewish settlement-building in East Jerusalem and a progressive intensification of the securitization and Judaization (Yiftachel 1999) of the spaces of Israeli-Palestinian interaction—from checkpoints to the Separation Wall in the West Bank which has received incredible attention from critical geographers and other social scientists (Harker 2010; Boano and Paquet 2014) whose focus was mostly on the profoundly negative consequences of spatial configurations associated, in particular, with the occupation (Ophir et all 2009) and their exceptionality (Boano and Marten 2013).

With the disintegration of the peace process, Jerusalem began to take on radical ethno-national significance, fueling a cyclical justification of violence culminating in a recent phase of ideological management of the landscape within the context of ethnic tensions and divisions. In Jerusalem, municipal, state, and private entities collaborate in appropriating “the city apparatus to buttress its domination and expansion” in a process that Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003:673) refer to as urban ethnocracy. In such regimes, they argue, “ethnicity, and not citizenship, forms the main criteria for distributing power and resources” (2003:689); which fits into a broader Zionist colonisation project aimed to expand Israeli territory (Pappè 2014, Yiftachel and Yacobi 2005).

To a large extent, the predominance of ethnonational splits and contested sovereignties has sidelined, or at least downplayed, mundane urban debates over growth and development, but capitalism serves to further urban ethnocracy by attracting well-to-do diaspora Jews to this traditionally poor, divided city. Some recent studies (Hercbergs and Noy 2015) have argued that the enclosing and exclusionary practices of urban ethnocracy and privatization are reshaping the production and consumption of the urban landscape of Jerusalem. Charney

and Rosen (2014) suggest however, that 'ordinary' conflicts over urban development (eg, sprawling development on the urban edge, inner-city redevelopment, and the provision of affordable housing) are relevant, in their operations and spatialization, and intersect and overlap with postcolonial urban processes. Chambers and Huggan (2015) suggest that, in that respect, the postcolonial city can be seen as "a dynamic site of social and cultural interaction in which colonial legacies have effectively been superseded, [...] in which colonial ways of thinking and acting are either deliberately or inadvertently reinvented and rehearsed". In this sense, postcolonial studies were certainly useful in depicting peculiar materialities; postcolonial cities, like all cities, make and unmake themselves in an ongoing process of creative dissolution in which the imaginative possibilities of 'urban renewal' are always shadowed by the material realities of 'spatial decay' (Charlton 2015).

For Safier (2001:136) there is probably no other city in the world where the "cultural dimension" of conflict, meaning inclusive systems of belief shaping ways of perceiving and acting in the world, has such direct and pervasive impact on its life and times". Moreover, it all hinges on a fundamentally spatial struggle, making it a unique space apparatus where a complex interaction of historical, religious, cultural, and political factors has, over time, produced an unusual city of enormous significance (Friedland and Hecht 1996). As Gazit (2010) suggests, Jerusalem might serve as a prototype for a mixed city, an urban "situation" in which two rival national communities occupies the same urban jurisdiction (Yacobi and Yiftachel 2003). Such fertile ground produces political theorists, sociologists, historians, geographers, and architects, increasingly focused on how Israel's territorial —and more broadly spatial—policies undermine Palestinian territoriality and its exceptionality due to scale, visibility and aesthetic (Boano and Marten 2013).

In this sense Jerusalem with its manifold uneven and unstable social, economical, colonial and political urban forces and spatial dispositive could become a signifier, a paradigm for urban studies. The next part of the paper will illustrate Giorgio Agamben political theory of paradigms and his concept of

“whatevermess” as an attempt to reflect on Jerusalem beyond being a super, hyper-exceptional case. What we aim to suggest, although superficially is that Jerusalem is located in the peculiar, extraordinary crux of several urban processes, and as such does appear to be the perfect model, the perfect example of any urbanism: on one side does seems illustrating the constitutive conflict at the core of every urbanism, and on the other the central colonial roots of all urbanisms.

Prior to embarking in such exploration is worth mention that Giorgio Agamben reflections are concerned with the origins and development of Western political thought and the ways in which it supports exclusionary structures of sovereign power but he does not explore the ways in which the geopolitical entity of “the West” emerged through its imperial domination of others. Agamben maintains a relative silence about colonialism and appears disinclined to engage with anti-colonial and postcolonial writers and activists whose experiences exclusion and spatial oppressions. However, his concepts, frameworks and methods of philosophical enquiry offer important and valuable resources for thinking critically about the political exclusions and abandonments characteristic of colonial situations (Svirsky and Bignall 2012). Despite a minor hint to Agamben’s essay *Metropolis* (2006) describes at least in its most visible political etymology, the only engagement with tropes of colonial and postcolonial analysis, but here, too, he is not “overtly concerned with concrete histories of colonisation and the material legacy of colonial violence on colonized peoples” (Svirsky and Bignall 2012: 3). Without liner too much in the uncharted territory of colonial studies, urban studies and Agamben political theory, the next part of the paper provide a critical bridge connecting two previously unrelated fields of exploration: Agamben’s theorisation of the *dispositif* and its concept of wateverness rather then oppositional tensions between particularism and exceptionalism, contested and ordinary.

### **Agamben’s model and method: examples, signatures and *whateverness***

We might argue that Jerusalem stands to urban studies as Foucault’s panopticon

stands to disciplinary power and governmental control. As historical causality, Bentham's design<sup>1</sup> had minor influences in the development of a type or a practice; rather it exemplified, beyond the historical influence it exerted, the full realization of institutional control. In Foucault's hands, the panopticon become a paradigm for an entire governmental model. Panopticon was not only wide-ranging in a given moment in time, it was an example of something wide-ranging over time. Why is Foucault's panopticon important in a reflection on Jerusalem and its role in urban studies? In order to answer this question we have to elaborate the notion of paradigm.

In one of his lesser-known books, *The Signature of all Things*, Giorgio Agamben, the Italian philosopher—famous globally for his *Homo Sacer* trilogy and his reflections on the state of exception—explained that he uses historical phenomena in his work, as “paradigms whose role was to constitute and make intelligible a broader historical-problematic context” (2009:9). Why did he use the word paradigm? Although he did not give any workable definition many of his commentators have suggested that he uses “paradigms to analyze political questions” and “apply the same genealogical and paradigmatic method Foucault employed” (de la Durantaye 2009:215). There is no a specific book where Agamben traces and explains his methodology, but as William Watkin notes, he did elaborate his philosophical enquiry method “a single system called philosophical archeology [composed] of three elements: the paradigm, the signature and the archaeology” (Watkin 2014:4). Agamben wrote that “when I say paradigm I mean something extremely specific—a methodological problems, like Foucault's with the Panopticon, where he took a concrete and real object but treated it not only as such but also [...] to elucidate a larger historical context”. Elsewhere he stated that paradigm is something like an example, an exemplum, a unique historical paradoxical nature that “on the one hand, every example is treated in effect as particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity” (Agamben 2001:14). As such, the paradigm is neither clearly inside nor clearly outside the group or set it exemplifies. Agamben exemplifies the coordinates of this paradigmatic method as a “real particular case”, or singularity with regards to what it is set apart from to

exemplify, making it both a real concrete situations and a representing instances. But how does he balance an understanding of the historical specificity of a paradigm with its exemplary value? Watkin (2014:4) suggests that *signatura* serves to interpret this exemplary value as it stand for a “mode of distribution of paradigms through time and across discourses [...] suspended between signifier and signified so rather then being a sign as such, it is what make a sign intelligible, by determine existence through actual usage”.

In order to understand the possible relevance to the notion of paradigms in the singularity/universality urban debate let's return for a moment to Agamben's epigrammatic statement<sup>1</sup> made in *Homo Sacer* a few years back, “today it is not the city, but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West” (Agamben 1998:181). What does Agamben mean when he says that concentration camps are the paradigm of our age? Certainly, he does not mean the return to that specific historical moment or a specific condition. Rather he thinks that what has emerged there, specifically can illustrate other—in this case—political moments. As proved in the widespread literature that stems from camps, such a historically specific mode of production of a space of detention and contention, serves to elucidate, to describe and to render visible other exceptional spatial and territorial logics (Diken and Laustsen 2005; Boano and Floris 2005; EK 2006; Giaccaria and Minca 2011). In a certain sense, a paradigm was for him what it already was for Plato—an “example” (*paradigma* is Greek for example). However, it was not just any example, or rather it was an example used in not just any fashion. Following Agamben, a paradigm is at once embedded in a given historical situation and a tool for better understanding “the present situation. These paradigms must then walk a fine line between past and present, and for this reason they require the most careful understanding—at once historical and hermeneutic—if they are to achieve their end” (de la Durataye 2009:350). As such their goal “is to render intelligible a series of phenomena whose relationship to one another has escaped, or might escape, the historian's gaze” (ibid). In the opening of *Signatura Rerum* (Agamben 2009:9), Agamben argued that in all his work “I have had occasion to analyze figures such as the *homo sacer*, the Muselman, the state of exception, and the concentration

camps that are, of course, discrete historical phenomena but that I have so treated as paradigm those function was not constitute and render intelligible a vast historico-problematic context". For Agamben, the paradigm does not function merely as lenses through which we see things that are already there, they not only render intelligible a given context, but they "constitute it". As such, the paradigm is not a metaphor that follows "the logic of the metaphorical transport of a signified, but instead the analogical one of an example" (de la Durantaye: 2009:349). Somehow reflecting on the potency and the limits of analogy and metonymy from Foucault, Agamben apparently gives two other rules to the paradigm in addition to the epistemological, discursive relations given in the original Foucault: it is a singular case that, isolated from its context, taken as exemplary and then risen up, constitutes this isolation by making intelligible a new set that if constituted reveals its own singularity; and this means that it is "deactivated" from its normal use, not so that it can move into a new context, which would be simply metaphoric, but so as to present the rule of its original usage.

For Agamben, "giving an example is a complex act" (2009:18) because "what the example shows is its belonging to a class, but for this very reason the example steps out of its class in the moment it exhibits and delimits it" (Agamben 1998:20). The example, qua paradigm, is thus "suspended" (Agamben 1999:260) from its being one instance of a class and, conversely, the class's supervening control of that example is "deactivated" (Agamben 2009:18).

What we found interesting in introducing Agamben's paradigmatic logic is its irreducibility to the traditional universal-particular, part-whole dualism. This irreducibility makes it "impossible to clearly separate an example's paradigmatic character—its standing for all cases—from the fact that it is one case among others" (Agamben 2009:18) placing one singularity-as-it-is-in-itself-in-language into a relation with other such singularities and with a set of singularities it uniquely constitutes. This dynamic analogical relation yields new potential comparabilities and relationships among singularities. But an example is not illustrative of something else (a generality, a pattern); it neither presupposes nor

offers a partial preview of some prior whole. Understanding via examples or paradigms is not a fitting of something new into something else (a category, a framework). As Watkin suggests “the paradigm is a mode of knowledge that moves between singularities. It does refute the general and the particular. It does refute dichotomous logic in favor of ‘bipolar analogical modes’. It is always suspended” (2014:18).

Before proceedings to reflect back on Jerusalem’s lessons learned and its being paradigmatic, is worth elaborating a bit more on ‘whateverness’ as a central possible characteristic useful in the debate here.

Giorgio Agamben, in *The Coming Community*<sup>1</sup> (1993), reflected around a whatever singularity as the subject of the coming community, a singularity that presents an “inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence” (Agamben 1993:9). The argument of the book revolves around the notion of qualunque - the Italian translation of the Latin *quodlibet* - translated as whatever, which Agamben translates as “being such that it always matters” instead of the traditional translation, “being, it does not matter which” (Agamben 1993:1). The whatever in question here, Agamben writes, “relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being such as it is” (ibid). It is this formulation of the subject and this conception of singularity, such as it is, that is at the heart of whatever singularity and the coming community and that maybe useful in the urbanism debate now.

Agamben considers singularity not in its indifference with regards to a common propriety but in its being as such (*tale qual è*); neither particular nor universal, neither individual nor generic, it refers rather to the “singular” and expresses a pure singularity. Pure singularity has no identity, it is omnivalent: “It is not determined vis-à-vis a concept, but it is not simply undetermined either; rather, it is determined only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities” (Agamben 1993:55).

Being neither particular nor universal this renunciation of identity and its politics does not involve resignation but, rather, a new form of political action. Pure singularities “have deposed all identity in order to appropriate belonging itself” (Agamben 1993:14). In other words, the disappropriation of all propriety constitutes the possibility for the appropriation of impropriety and inessentiality as the unique being that makes whatever singularities exemplar. The issue is in fact how to move beyond the logic of belonging, beyond the idea “being in”, “being defined as such” (Salzani 2012:214). Belonging itself, according to Agamben, is a state of being that acknowledges the (social and affective efficacy of) desire for inclusion while, at the same time, resisting the concretization of static categories (defined racially, nationally, sexually, religiously, or otherwise) and would afford not only inclusion, but also exclusion. Agamben situates whatever being precisely at the border or “threshold” between inside and outside, “a point of contact with an external space that must remain empty”.

### **Is then Jerusalem a paradigm? Three ways of looking at urban *dispositif***

Rather than an exceptional case (Boano and Martens 2013) or a very peculiar/specific example of colonial city (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003) or a divided city (Allegra 2013), stemming from the above, can we consider Jerusalem a paradigm?

Agamben’s short essay, *Metropolis* (2006), seems, at least by way of a political etymology, to say precisely this about cities. In the essay he did offer a “banal consideration on the etymology of the word *metropolis*” (Agamben 2006) that the word *metropolis* has a strong connotation of maximum dislocation and spatial and political dishomogeneity, raising a series of doubts about the current idea of the *metropolis* as a urban, continuum and “relatively homogeneous fabric” (Ibid). What Agamben does appear to suggest is to “keep the term metropolis for something substantially other from the city, in the traditional conception of the *polis*, i.e. something politically and spatially isonomic” (Ibid). In separating the use of the term Agamben suggest to “to understand the process whereby power progressively takes on the character of government of things and the living, or if you like of an economy [...] nothing but government [...] of the living and things [...]” (Ibid).

As already mentioned Agamben is not concerned with colonialism per se, but with the paradigm it provides for understanding a more general set of problems and that “[...] the metropolis is the *dispositif* or group of *dispositifs* that replaces the city when power becomes the government of the living and of things” (Ibid). Signaling the possibility of a new exception in the spatial logic of the city and a need to discuss and study not the morphology but the governance of any space.

*Metropolis* comes to mean, for Agamben, a ‘dislocated and dishomogenous’ space - one that can be traced in every city of the {Western world], alluding to “the impossibility of univocally defining borders, walls, spatialisation, because they are the result of the action of this different paradigm: no longer a simple binary division but the projection on this division of a complex series of articulating and individuating processes and technologies” (Ibid):

In order to reflect on such complex manifold uneven and unstable social, economical, colonial and political urban force the spatial *dispositif* is always present in any urban condition , let's turn our attention to a peculiar angle of *dispositif* that Agamben suggests as a reflection on sovereignty, on life and governmentality. Agamben suggests that the *dispositif* is defined as a heterogeneous set of elements (discourses, regulations, institutions, architectures) and, at the same time, the network between such elements. It has a concrete strategic function and it is located in power relations. Thus these are contingent relations, subject to continual change and perpetual inventiveness over time, but which produce tangible material effects – in the forms of subjectivation and in terms of specific modes of construction (of buildings, of territories and cartographies) and treatment (of people, environment, etc.)” (Agamben 2009:11-12). Agamben alludes to the contemporary landscape, saying that advanced capitalism produces a great accumulation of dispositive, which in Jerusalem’s urbanism case is certainly pretty evident; where there are in place spatialised *dispositifs* of division and ethno-spatial patterns of archipelagos, enclaves, camps and camp-like (Weizman 2007). As we tried to elaborate elsewhere in other reflections (Boano and Marten 2013; Boano and Talocci 2014) *dispositifs* are useful because they allow the disentanglement of the

relation between a certain notion of power and governmentality and since today economics prevails on politics, *dispositifs* are massively proliferating in all urban settings and take several distinctive forms and all in a manner or another in order to govern our lives. Secondly, *dispositif* is a set of elements and a network between such elements and thus allows a scalar territorial vision, aiming to depict functional management of the political economy in a strategic manner insisting on both space and time. Finally, according to Agamben, a *dispositivo* is a comprehensive set of elements and so it is not ontology but a praxis that manages the being and thus it produces subjectivity and it can be violated through an act of profanation. What follows is a brief narrative of some certainly contested urban settings read through their urban dispositive. The different urban geographies chosen here are part of a continuous transnational action-oriented research that investigate the nature and the challenge of design and collective strategies in contested urban conditions. In maintaining their singularities - when read through the lenses of an urban *dispositif* - a contingent set of relations subject to continual change of discourses, regulations, institutions and architectures, is able to develop a new sort of intelligibility. And as such to expose new potential linkages among concepts, terms, objects and actions with Jerusalem singularities but without formally establishing linkages once and for all as a completed and all-inclusive set or determined simplistic labels. The following short detour around three different narratives of *dispositifs* are not intended to represent a complete manifestation of the *dispositifs* but rather as examples from elsewhere to reflect on the tension between particularity and generalization of the urban in relation to Jerusalem – as such they are important to understand the tensions and opportunity of Jerusalem-as-paradigm.

### **Relocation dispositifs in Phnom Penh**

Elsewhere (Talocci and Boano 2015) we investigated, with a socio spatial ethnography, the complex and violent practice of eviction and relocation in Phnom Penh; focusing on those emerging from the eviction<sup>1</sup> of Dey Krahorm, a very central informal settlement developed in the middle of the area known as Tonle Bassac Tribune earlier in 2009 to make room for a new development. The

evictees have been scattered and their original sites re-composed in 54 extra-peripheral spaces, 20 to 50 km from the city centre. The act of emptying the urban fabric at the centre of the city has been paired precisely to the use of peripheral and therefore cheap land to relocate informal populations. Although forced displacements are in contrast with both national and international legal frameworks (Lindstrom 2013), authorities use evictions and resettlements as urban dispositif. Disregarding how forced displacement *de facto* means a disruption of livelihoods and social networks, authorities and developers have used relocations as a fundamental socio-spatial *dispositif* to govern the city's transformation and pursue objectives of land speculation and social cleansing, toward building the image of a "charming, globalised and competitive city" (Talocci and Boano 2015). Whether the spatial effects of the relocation *dispositif* is evident in their exclusionary dimension, their effects are visible also in non-discursive practices. The current evidence allows us to say that in the coming years it is likely that most of the relocation sites will configure as big peripheral holes: giant planning and urban design failures where populations strive to survive or decide to abandon the sites and search for more secure livelihoods closer to the centre. Although rife with many contradictions, the different cartographies of relocation we found in Phnom Penh tell us that a new urbanity is being born in Phnom Penh's outskirts.

### **Squatter-occupied spaces *dispositif* in Rome**

Studying and developing action-research and participatory design actions in Porto Fluviale a squatter-occupation community (Boano and Talocci 2014), which belongs to the galaxy of squatter-occupations<sup>1</sup> in Rome, we discovered that, in spite of the constant risk of eviction, each occupation develops a critical practice of reappropriation and reuse. In studying the spatial and socio-spatial dynamics in the squatter-occupations, their adaptations and transformations, we noticed how they worked to counter the mechanism of the commercial and hyper neoliberal strategy of the whole city: "separated from the rest of the city but at the same time connected to a multitude of other spaces, mirroring the outside reality but more open, for instance when hosting events, or more closed, when an external threat is approaching [...] In such leftover pieces of urban

fabric, Social Movements have been able to become the designers of their own everyday life and space, and to move the latter back to a neglected common use, achievement typical of profaning operation [...] representing a form of negligence toward the mainstream production of space and knowledge in the city. Negligence that is manifested in appropriating and reshaping an urban fabric originally meant for other purposes and users—reinventing common uses, introducing new ways of doing politics within the squatter-occupied spaces" (Boano and Talocci 2014). What seems important in the study of Rome was not only discovering such urban discursive formations and identifying their moments of operativity, but also the different experiences and practices that subvert the sacred tenets of urbanism (Boano and Talocci 2014) able to deactivate the apparatuses of power which the urban governmental *dispositif* has put in place. The reflections on this squatter-occupation community depicts the dynamics of the contemporary neoliberal side of the *dispositif* urban landscape, described and visible as profit oriented, predatory speculations and accumulations by dispossessions and the continuous, discursive, culturally entrenched and overwhelming exercise of power that all actors of the urban transformation perform in order to guarantee themselves access and control over certain spaces of the city.

### **The Upgrading dispositif in Medellin peripheral urbanism**

Despite the extreme popularization of the Medellin miracle (Davila 2013) in planning and architectural literature, we had the opportunity to engage in action research with the political nature of Medellin's urban interventions questioning the very nature of the social urbanism discursive practice (Ortiz Arciniegas 2015) implemented in recent years. Much has been written on the city from many disciplinary perspectives and around different events including the World Urban Forum as a supreme example of a social expression and an enlightened, progressive and must-follow spatial practice dealing with informality and slums. Regional comparative reflections emerged, also increasing the status of Medellin as paradigmatic example in the urban discourse of Latin America, as well as in the discussion around local government leadership in urban transformations. We were able to diagnose interactions between political agendas, architecturally

invasive branded projects, architectural ego and urban marketing influencing a renewed urban discourse. The spectacular imagery of these interventions has transformed how “a critical area of the city was perceived by insiders and outsiders...leading to relevant social, socio-spatial and socio-economic revitalization, while promoting inclusive patterns of urbanization” (Blanco and Kobayashi 2009:76); becoming another example of urban design that, masked with social discourses, capitulates to neoliberal urbanization and state led control, loosing the opportunity to close the circle between abstraction and representation and the site specificity of architecture. Extensive action-research around the territory of Comuna 8, in the central east part of the Aburra Valley, where about 40% of urbanization in Medellin has informal origin and intricacies with crime/armed conflict, was able to disentangle three fundamental elements of the informal urbanization politics in Medellin: first, the pressure on the growth management of Medellin’s urban fringes and the obsessive control-like mechanisms deployed by various planning tools including the building code, environmental protections and green corridors. Second, the de-politicization of planning and architecture as discipline and praxis that allows for several discursive and material formations of disciplinary regimes of control, connectivity and access. Third, the aggressive and hyperbolic urban marketing, attached to the co-option of social movements by the rhetoric of urban equity, accessibility and governability. The social urbanism rhetoric organized around an urban politics of informality that create a permanent space of exception allows for the creation of discursive and spatial *dispositifs* that fuelled political imagination locally and globally that “penetrates the bodies of subjects, and governs their forms of life” (Agamben 2009:14).

Whatever singularity is “singularity seen from an unfamiliar side—that of the singular” (de la Durantaye 2009:162). The figure of whatever singularity thus points beyond the binary of the particular/universal, which has always taken a relevant part in the debate around urbanism. How exactly does whatever singularity escapes the binary between the particular and the universal? To answer this question, “the example” of dispositif and its transversal narrative across different cases is useful in its being an exemplar here because it “is

characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same time and, at the same time, it is included among these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all" (Agamben 1993: 9–10). As such Jerusalem if read with its urban *dispositif* lenses become, as the other cases, sketched above, potentially, an example. Seeing it seen neither as an universal nor specific example Jerusalem-as-paradigm, with its manifold uneven and unstable social, economical, colonial and political urban forces and spatial dispositive could become, not a perfect model but a signifier of future urbanism a *a tertium datur*, a paradigm for urban studies, a theoretical object a "dislocated and dishomogenous space - one that can be traced in every city of the {Western world} (Agamben 2006).

## Conclusion

Jerusalem, as a hyper-exceptional case is certainly trapped in tensions between particularism and exceptionalism. I attempted an alternative approach, suggesting Jerusalem-as-paradigm, illustrated briefly reflecting on the notion of *dispositif* as the *locus* where different cases moved from singularity to singularity: they open or reopen our understanding of what we encounter in its whateverness, in its specific quiddity, rather than as a part of or example of anything. A singularity is positioned in relation to the class that it uniquely constitutes allowing "statements and discursive practices to be gathered in a new intelligible ensemble in a new problematic context" (Agamben 2009:18).

Agambenian paradigms offer us a powerful kind of third way, exposing a new kind of productive intelligibility, continually moving from singularity to singularity by way of analogy, exposing new potential linkages among concepts, terms, objects and actions but without formally establishing those linkages once and for all as a completed and all-inclusive set; as the one we briefly sketched with the dispostif. At the same time, paradigms may provide urban theorists with a new approach, a new manner of engendering critique, inquiry and action in a more pluralist comparative urban theory without simply providing urban cases in contrast to dominant others, as exception to hegemonic and widespread trends, or as simply hyper exceptionality; or as Peck puts it, "enclaves from the explanatory tyranny of overdrawn" (Peck 2015:170), of city-centrism. An

Agambenian paradigmatic understanding of Jerusalem directs us not to fixate on what is known and what fits into a set of parameters, but rather to explore whatever outside those parameters seems to stand in a potentially fecund conjunction and analogy with something inside them. As he says, what is at stake here is nothing less than “the very possibility of thinking in terms of classes” (Agamben 1993:70). For Agamben, the paradigm is ultimately about *learning to see again*, not starting with already perfectly known and categorized objects (or ideas or categories), but rather with a fresh experience of one individual object and the analogical relations it may have to others, and the novel groupings that may arise. If we follow Peck's call to constantly remake urban theory, learning to see again the urban and the contested nature of it via Agamben's whatever urbanism is a useful theoretical gesture to start thinking about urban theory for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jerusalem can serve to articulate relations between examples and class/types at three different levels: epistemological, a way of knowing the nature of contestations and conceptions of such knowledge, ethical as fostering of freedom from presupposed categories and reified principles (even the contested one) and ontological as a type of being that exposes the potential of knowing and communicating the intelligibility of contestation. Learning from Jerusalem then will hopefully resist constructing Jerusalem as universal's illustrative “contested city par excellence” or “divided city par excellence” and remains open to a multiplicity of engagements with it. Hopefully theoretically considering Jerusalem-as-paradigm can assist in resolving the tensions encapsulated in the history of urbanism and its colonial contested conditions. As such,

Being neither particular nor universal, but a paradigm, Jerusalem is not a renunciation of identity, and its politics does not involve resignation, but, rather, a new form of political action. Pure singularities “have deposed all identity in order to appropriate belonging itself” (Agamben 1993:14) and open the possibility for a whatever urbanism as being as “it does not matter which” (Agamben 1993:1). The example Jerusalem is an “empty space” where whatever singularities can communicate with each other without surrendering to the totalizing force of identity. This empty space, however, is not properly a physical or conceptual location or place, but is instead the experience of comparison and

of a newly theoretical elaboration that is taking-place. Jerusalem, as such, presents a potential character. It is in fact constituted by an infinite series of modal oscillations. *Quodlibet*, qualunque, whatever urbanism is not to be understood as indifference, generality, or generic, but, rather, as being an urbanism such that it always matters.

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